

# Act 168 - HUNTING, FISHING, AND TRAPPING IN WISCONSIN STATE PARKS

The Sporting Heritage Act of 2012 (Act 168) opens state park lands to hunting and trapping. Prior to this act, state park lands were closed until opened. Under Act 168, they are opened until closed for hunting and trapping. The Act provides two provisions for closing state parks. The first allows (but does not require) the Department of Natural Resources to prohibit hunting, fishing and trapping within 100 yards of a designated use area. Secondly, the Act allows the Natural Resources Board, by majority vote, to prohibit hunting, fishing and trapping on a portion or all of a state park when necessary to protect public safety or to protect a unique animal or plant community.

The Natural Resources Board is holding five Listening Sessions around the State of Wisconsin between October 29<sup>th</sup> and November 13<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of these sessions is to hear feedback from the public on the proposed implementation of Act 168 on state park lands. It is anticipated the Board will review planned prohibitions on hunting in state parks during their regularly scheduled meeting on December 11-12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Act 168 takes effect for state parks on January 1, 2013.

State park lands by definition include: named state parks, state ice age trail areas, linear rail grade state trails, and the north country trail. Not included: state recreation areas, state forests, fishery areas, wildlife areas, and state natural areas.

*Department* proposed hunting closures: within 100 yards from popular designated use areas, such as picnic spots, campgrounds, remote campsites, beaches, all State Trails to include the Ice Age Trail, and certain activity areas.

*Department* proposed trapping closures: same as hunting plus 100 yards from all designated trails.

*Department* proposed fishing closures: bow fishing within 100 yards of beaches, boat launches and fishing piers.

*Natural Resource Board* proposed hunting/trapping closures by time period:

- 1) Hunting would only be allowed on state park properties from either October, 15<sup>th</sup> through the Thursday prior to Memorial Day or, November 15<sup>th</sup> through the Thursday prior to Memorial Day, as individually applied to specific properties.
- 2) Hunting would only be allowed during approved seasons and during the hours of sunrise to 11 p.m. Hunters will be allowed to enter a park property up to one hour prior to sunrise. Trappers may enter the property one hour

before the statewide trapping hours of 4:00 a.m. Trapping hours end at 8:00 p.m.

*Natural Resource Board* proposed hunting/trapping closure by location: in some instances, the Board will be asked to close areas of a park that are greater than 100 yards from a designated use area. See individual park maps for specifics.

What is allowed on State Park properties with the passage of Act 168?

## *YES!*

- Camping, hiking, biking, swimming and picnicking, etc. will continue as usual.
- Hunting, trapping and fishing, as approved.
- Website access to all hunting maps for each state park property.
- Park admission fees and camping fees will continue to be required.
- Pets are allowed and existing leash rules apply except when in the act of hunting as allowed.
- Hunting will now be allowed in state park properties without a special hunting permit.
- Park visitors not engaged in hunting are not required to wear blaze orange (although they are encouraged to do so).
- Hunters may uncase their weapons in a closed area and walk to an open hunting area.

## *NO!*

- Hunting or trapping outside of State Park established seasons, times, and areas.
- Trapping within 100 yards of a designated trail.
- Hunting or trapping along a state trail except where specifically allowed.
- Special youth hunt seasons in early October.
- Bear hunting will be allowed nor will bear hunting summer training.
- Hunting within 100 yards of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.
- Bow and spear fishing within 100 yards of a beach, boat launch, or fishing pier.